

# The Pulpit and Politics.

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A

## DISCOURSE

PREACHED IN THE

College Chapel of the Ohio Wesleyan University,

APRIL 23, 1854.

BY

E. THOMSON, D.D.

PRESIDENT.

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At a meeting of the students of the Ohio Wesleyan University, April 24, Mr. C. KETCHAM was called to the chair, and J. A. SLOAN elected Secretary.

On motion of A. J. LYON, it was

*Resolved*, That a committee of five be appointed to wait upon Dr. E. THOMSON, and request a copy of the sermon delivered on the 23d instant, and procure the publication of 2000 copies of the same in pamphlet form.

Whereupon C. W. CHANDLER, A. J. LYON, C. A. VANANDA, E. BRADFORD and GEO. MATHER, were appointed said committee.

C. W. KETCHAM, *President*.

J. A. SLOAN, *Secretary*.

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[CORRESPONDENCE.]

REV. DR. THOMSON:

*Respected Sir*—The students of the Ohio Wesleyan University, believing that the publication of your Lecture on the Relation of the Pulpit to Politics, would be promotive of good in the present state of public feeling, through the undersigned committee solicit it for said purpose.

We are, Sir, very respectfully,

Yours, &c.,

CHAS. W. CHANDLER,  
A. J. LYON,  
C. A. VANANDA,  
E. BRADFORD,  
G. MATHER,

*Committee.*

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OHIO WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY, April 24th, 1854.

TO MESSRS. CHANDLER, LYON, VANANDA, BRADFORD and MATHER, Committee:

GENTLEMEN—Your note soliciting of me a copy of my Lecture on the Relation of the Pulpit to Politics, has been duly considered.

Although the Lecture belongs to a series, in the light of which it should be read, and was written hastily, and without the most distant reference to its publication, yet the circumstances under which it is asked are such that I do not feel at liberty to withhold it.

They who know my life and my spirit, will be able properly to interpret my words.

E. THOMSON.

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## DISCOURSE.

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MATT. XXII, 21.—Render unto Cesar the things that are Cesar's, &c.

Cesar here stands for civil government. This is an ordinance of God. It is necessary to society; society is necessary to our improvement—happiness—even existence: the human race would soon become extinct without it. These propositions I have heretofore demonstrated. What is that civil government which is so important? The answer may be given in the words of an apostle: “For rulers are not a terror to good works but to the evil.” \* \* “Revenge to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” The evil to be punished by the civil rulers, is that evil which interferes with the rights of others: government was instituted not for the reformation or salvation, but *protection* of society—and its permanency and prosperity may be measured by the degree in which it accomplishes this end. This is not only *what* the government ought to do, but *all* it ought to do. It should assume no more power than is necessary to the preservation of society; and to protect every man in the enjoyment of his rights by the punishment of those who infringe them is all that is necessary. Government may conveniently do many things to promote the public education, welfare and improvement, but as these are not *essential*, they ought not to be performed without the express *consent* of the people. Government, which protects rights by punishing wrongs, is then, both in the constitution of nature and the charter of revelation, ordained by God: and no other government is. To say that government, no matter how unrighteous, is of God, is to make him responsible for the enormities of Caligula and the crimes of Nero: to indorse the theory of despots that “the king can do no wrong:” to reverse the theory of republicans, that “resistance to tyrants is obedience to God:” to repudiate the

*magna charta libertatum*; condemn the reformation of the 16th century, the British revolution of 1688, the American revolution of 1776, and indeed every improvement in government and enlargement of human rights since the days of Nimrod—for what advance has been made without resistance to government? Be it observed that nothing is said in scripture about the *form* of government; it is of little matter what the form is, if it perfectly protects all rights; for this will ensure perfect liberty, whether under a monarchy or a democracy. If, on the other hand, government fail to protect men's rights or redress their wrongs, it is a tyranny, whether it consist of one ruler or a hundred millions. The *multitude* may be a tyrant as well as the *king*. Some superficial minds confound *liberty* with a particular *form* of government, as though a majority could do no wrong. But are not men depraved? Have not the *masses* filled cities with slain, and fields with desolation, and gutters with innocent blood? Have they not made such havoc that men have fled to despotism as a refuge from democracy? Have not republican constitutions been drafted for no other purpose than to protect *minorities* from the tyranny of *majorities*? Who would be willing, no matter how democratic his feelings, to have the question whether he should live or be a member of society determined by vote? God made you and you have a right to life, if you do not injure others—you cannot live without society, you have a right therefore to society. If one society may expel you without fault, then may every other, and thus drive you into the ocean. Neither the right to live, nor the right to society is so dear as liberty. Would you submit that to be decided by majority or plurality of voices? This were to go back far beyond the days of Luther.

Suppose a government protect our rights, what do we owe it?

1st, *obedience*. This we should render cheerfully, constantly, conscientiously—it is due to ourselves—to our fellowmen—to God. We must not demand perfection before we render obedience: perfection is not to be expected in human institutions—sufficient, if government in a good degree accomplish its end, advance in the right direction, and maintain an elevation consistent with the civ-  
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ilization and spirit of the people and the age. We should cherish a conservative feeling towards it, hesitate to oppose its measures, and construe charitably its acts and utterances. In this country we have special need to cultivate the spirit of obedience, to breathe it into our children and to exhibit it to our neighbors.

2d. We owe it *honor*. We should respect all its authorities, and, so far as we can, consistently with truth and duty, speak well of them, and teach our children to reverence them. He who does not respect the maker, the judge and the minister of the law, will not be likely to respect the *law itself*. As by the government of the family men are trained for the government of the state, so by the government of the state they are trained for the higher government of heaven. Reverence for rules has therefore an important religious bearing. "Love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king."

He who depreciates his ruler depreciates himself—we would not suffer a stranger to insult the governor: why? Because we should feel it an insult to ourselves. The manner in which we are accustomed to denounce our public men lowers us in the estimation of foreign nations. He who depreciates righteous rulers depreciates that law "whose seat is the bosom of God, whose voice is the harmony of the world." God has said, "thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people."

3d. We owe it *support*. Righteous rulers well deserve compensation. Whether this be raised directly or indirectly, it should be paid cheerfully. "For this cause pay ye tribute also." \* \* "Render to all their dues, tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom." It is intensely wicked to defraud the revenue. So far was our Saviour from it, that when the officers came to collect of him a tax of doubtful legality, he said, "Notwithstanding, lest we should offend, take that and give unto them for me and thee." He teaches the same lesson in the text. Three rival parties join to ensnare him. The Herodians—politicians—who maintained that it was right to support the Roman government; the Pharisees—bigots—who denied this; and the Sadducees—infidels—who were indifferent upon the subject. If the Saviour answered

the question propounded to him affirmatively, the Pharisees were to arouse both the religious bigotry of their party and the national prejudices of the common people against him; for the Jews were looking and hoping for a Messiah who should assume temporal authority and lead them forth to universal conquest. If he answered negatively, the Herodians were to combine their party against him and charge him before the civil authority with treason. If he did not answer, all parties were to charge him with cowardice. He makes them answer themselves—"Show me a denarius; whose image and superscription is this?" they say Cesar's. "Render, therefore, to Cesar the things that are Cesar's," &c. The fact that Cesar coined the money—one of the highest acts of state sovereignty—was proof that he exercised civil authority. When they acknowledged this, they implied an obligation to pay tribute. The regulation of the currency is one of the legitimate acts of government and brings under obligation those who use it to pay for coining.

We should pay tax, not merely as a matter of policy or of duty to man, but also as a matter of duty to God. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake."

4th. We owe to civil government our *prayers*. "I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions and giving of thanks, be made for all men. For *kings*, and for all that are in *authority*," &c. I Tim. 2: 1.

We have thus far proceeded upon the supposition that government is confined within its proper sphere, and is faithful within that sphere. But suppose, what is naturally to be expected, owing to the weakness of human reason and the strength of human depravity, that government is perverted. The question may arise, when is government perverted? The answer is, I think, simple. 1st. When it fails to protect its subjects in the enjoyment of their rights; or 2d. When it requires its subjects to do wrong. But who are the subjects of government? Human beings, of course—and who are human beings? They who possess the essential attributes of humanity. What are these? They are not to be found in color, or feature, or flesh, or blood—

they are reason, affection, conscience. These confer the capacities of comprehending, loving, serving God, and lift the being possessing them aloft above the mere animal creation. He who is capable of obeying God is accountable to God, and he who is accountable to God has the rights of man. What are the rights of man? We hold these truths to be revealed, that all men are sprung from the same father, plunged in the same ruin, and redeemed by the same Saviour. A natural inference is that all have *equal* rights. Our revolutionary fathers held this to be self-evident, that among these rights—natural and inalienable—are “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” Inferiority does not extinguish rights. If you claim control over another because of your superiority, another may claim you by the same title. Such a claim is indeed rarely set up. It is not the *inferiority*\* of the slave, but his *status*, on which the master rests; the more the slave improves—the whiter becomes his skin—the greater the infusion of Anglo Saxon blood that floats in his veins, the tighter does the master hold him. Oppression does not cancel rights. If a man buys property of a thief, he gets a thief’s title; if he sells it, he conveys a thief’s title; if he bequeaths it, he bequeaths a thief’s title. Ill gotten property may, in time, be rightfully acquired by possession, provided the *original owner cannot be found*; but in man there is always a *soul*—an *original owner*; so that, however many ancestors of the slave may have been sold, the present master has no better title than the original man-stealer. Law cannot destroy human rights; it is the province of law to *confirm* rights, not to *annihilate* them. The alleged incapacity of certain men for liberty, does not destroy their inalienable rights. How did such incapacity originate? Do you say it is natural? It were a paradox to say that God would perpetuate a race of *human* beings incapable of liberty. What rank would they hold in the scale of beings? What would be their position at the last day and beyond it? It were a libel

\* There are some who deny that the negro belongs to the human race—they would put the naturalist at fault, the southern sensualist in prison or on the gallows, and the mulatto—I know not where.

both upon man and God. If the alleged incapacity is produced by our oppression, can this give us a title to the subjects of that oppression? Such a claim could be set up in favor of any tyrant. It goes to this point—that a man's rights over another are in proportion to the wrongs he commits upon him, and hence, that the longer a man suffers wrong, the less is he entitled to relief, until at length protracted oppression utterly extinguishes all his rights. Some rivet the chains upon the slave because he is content with his condition. If it be true that a man is satisfied with the condition of a slave, *why* is it true? Because slavery has imbruted him. If a surgeon, by pressure upon your brain, were so to impair your reasoning powers as to make you satisfied to be his slave, would that ensure him a valid title to what was left of you?

But cannot God subject one man to another as a slave, and has he not sanctioned slavery in his word? Having discussed this question in a preceding lecture, I have only to say now, that by the same rule of interpretation by which you can make the Bible sanction slavery, you may make it approve of tyranny and polygamy. A government may not only deprive its subjects of rights, but require them to do wrong. Who is to judge when a government does so? for what may appear wrong to one man may appear right to another.\* To a certain extent this is true. But there is a region within which all is clear. To love God, to love man, for example, are duties which all must acknowledge. Cruelty, adultery, fraud and theft, are condemned by every sane mind. If the legislature of Ohio should pass a law requiring us to chase down every man not more than five feet six inches high who should be trying to get his wheat to the Canada market, and enjoining us to distribute his wheat among his neighbors, and all this because he was not any taller, we should all agree that it was wrong.

The text gives no doubtful index to the mode by which we may determine when a government transcends its powers. That over which a government has power it may regulate. It can stamp its image on weights, and scales, and landmarks, and flags: it

\* Liberty of conscience may be allowed up to the point at which a man supposes himself at liberty to infract the rights of others.



may therefore issue its decrees to mark boundaries, and regulate commerce, and measures and fortifications, but when it comes to the human soul, it finds another image there, and hears another voice. Render unto God the things that are God's. Lift up your eye to the heavens; try to efface God's image on the sky and stamp your own there, before you attempt to turn the human soul into gold and run it in your die. Stop the revolving earth with a stamp of your foot, or stay the sun in his course with your curse, before you prescribe the course of human thought, and feeling, and will. Bring on your chains, kindle up your fires around a man. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh."

Suppose a government be perverted, what shall we do? Some would say, overthrow it. Let us beware how we do this; especially in a land of free speech, where errors may be exploded and public opinion moulded according to truth. Civil war is the most horrible of all war. The issue of battle is not always determined by the right. An unsuccessful attempt at revolution puts back the day of deliverance, by depriving the oppressed of their leaders, impressing their cause with shame, strengthening their oppressors, and emboldening and provoking their enemies to still further oppression. A successful revolution is effected at the cost of much blood, and treasure, and life; overthrows existing institutions, many of which are always good and sometimes invaluable; excites a spirit of anarchy; injures the public morals, and frequently leads to a despotism more dreadful than that which it overthrows.

There are some who talk lightly of a dissolution of our Union. They have not properly considered either its value or the consequence of dissolving it. The Union is precious. It diminishes the hazards of foreign wars and the dangers of domestic violence. It secures to us uniformity in the administration of justice, respectability in the eyes of the nations, and the perpetuity of our free institutions. It harmonizes the conflicting interests and weakens the sectional prejudices of a people bound by the ties of a common origin, a common conflict, a common language, a common literature, a common religion, and inhabiting States broken

by no natural boundary. It exhibits the only example of democratic government on an extensive scale that the world has ever seen ; it holds out the hand of welcome to the oppressed of all lands but one, and animates the friends of liberty throughout the earth. It could not be dissolved without the shedding of blood, perhaps in torrents more fearful than the world has ever seen. If the dissolution were effected, it would be followed by a succession of annoyances leading to a succession of wars, which would end God only knows when. If, therefore, we find our government imperfect—if we find that it not only fails to protect a class of citizens in their rights, but protects some of the States in oppression, let us be patient ; let us, when we think of disunion, balance the probable *evil* against the probable *good* of such a step, and consider whether there is not a better way to compass our end. I have never failed to pray, “God save the United States,” or to believe that their union would be permanent, or to hope that emancipation can be achieved in constitutional modes.

What then is our duty, first, if government fail to protect its subjects in the exercise of their rights? Some feel no concern, provided their own rights are secured. This is gross injustice. By the social compact, society is bound to protect its members, and government is its agent. Every man is responsible to the extent of his power and influence in the State for the wrongs of government.

Under the old dispensation, it was written, “If thou forbear to deliver them that are drawn unto death, and those that are ready to be slain : if thou sayest, behold we knew it not, doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall he not render to every man according to his work?” Under the new dispensation, the sum of morality is that truth, “Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you,” a perfect “two inch gage,” by which any man, in any situation, may measure his obligations to his fellow man. Put yourself in the situation of the oppressed, and you can learn your duty to him. Were you a slave, what would you have me do? Never say one word for you, lest I offend some wily poli-

tician, or call forth the denunciations of some faithless editor? No, no.

But, 2d, suppose government require the subject to do wrong. Shall I obey? Not while there is a God in Heaven. "Render unto God the things that are God's."

There were higher and lower law divines in ancient times. In the valley of the Nile, Pharoah said, "slay the children;" but the midwives saved them *alive*. On the plain of Dura, the office-seekers said: "O, king, live forever; thou hast made a decree that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, harp, flute, sackbut, psaltery and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image; but there are certain Jews that have not regarded thee." Higher law men said: "Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve other gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." In the palace of Darius, on a certain occasion, the presidents, governors, &c., said to the king: "Hast thou not signed a decree that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? \* \* Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed: but maketh his petition three times a day." Once in the sanhedrim, the High Priest said to certain apostles: "Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name, and behold ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us." Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

But can we not do something more than refuse obedience to unrighteous decrees, and sympathize with the subjects of oppression? Yea, verily! Men have intellect, heart, conscience. We can petition, remonstrate. This is a privilege granted by usage, under the most despotic governments, and secured by the constitution under our own. The cruellest tyrants have generally suffered the worst rebels to *pray* to them. The Emperor of Morocco, the most perfect despot in the world, gives audience

four times a week to even the meanest of his subjects, though sometimes the most boastful democrats have refused to hear the prayers of their constituents. Well may we say, "let us not fall into the hands of man. Let us fall into the hands of God, for very great are his mercies." He invites sinners to pray, to supplicate and deprecate, and facilitates their approaches by a Mediator. I suppose the common people of this country will not be denied the right of petition so long as the name of Adams is remembered, though it is not so clear that their pastors will fare so well, unless (in relation to the matter or form of their memorials) they happen to think with the majority of the Senate, for which the claim of infallibility is set up. But why not be heard? Have they not sense enough to know right from wrong? or do they not give sufficient heed to the doings of their rulers?\* or have they so much interest in the public treasury as not to be able to escape an improper bias? or have they not sufficient moral purity to express opinions side by side with men that handle types, or who sit in *privileged* seats, for which I believe no certificate of *moral* character is required? Why not, then? One answers, "they should have nothing to do with politics." There is a sense in which I admit this proposition. I hope never to see the Church connected with the State.† True, there are arguments for such connection. It secures the pulpit the best talents, clothes it with influence, and gives it independence of popular support. I deem no religious literature equal to that of the English Church, and it could hardly have been produced without the patronage of the State. But there are evils in that patronage: it weakens the faith, and multiplies the temptations, and strengthens the pride of the clergy; instead of emboldening ministers to declaim against *public* vices and *religious* errors, it has enticed them to cover up *private* vices and *political* corruption. Thank God, the

\* It is said the clergy are ignorant on political subjects. Perhaps it would hardly be kind to inquire if politicians are not ignorant on moral subjects.

† I have no fears that way just now; more fear of an establishment of atheism, than of an establishment of religion among us. Strange that some politicians should be conservative of slavery, which is not essential to government, and destructive of religion, which is.

pulpit of this land *owes* nothing to the State, and *fears* nothing from it: it is competent to judge without *bias* and speak without *trepidation*.

The great argument for the connection of Church and State, viz., that the patronage of the latter is necessary to religion, has been swept away by overwhelming facts. The dissenters of England have been steadily encroaching upon the "Establishment." The churches of America outgrow and outshine all the other churches of the world. No longer let Zion be found in league with the State against the liberties of mankind, upon the plea that she cannot live without royal favor. From the first, Jesus said, "my kingdom is not of this world." His birth, his life, his death, was a comment on these words. He would have his ministers *free from political designs*. The man who enters the pulpit to plead for political purposes, to aggrandize himself, or punish his political enemies, or please his political friends, or to endow his church or benefit his ministry by political agencies or influences, prostitutes the sacred place. Christ would also have his ministers *free from a political spirit*; and as it is difficult to escape such a spirit while connected with political parties, it is well that the minister, as much as may be, avoid them, and stand in politics, not *neutral*—this were unworthy of a man—but *independent*; so as to be able to judge without difficulty and speak without hesitancy, when men "frame mischief by a law."

Ministers are strongly exposed to the contagion of a political spirit, and tempted to indulge it, for when they do they summon to their aid a powerful party, particularly if it be the dominant one, and they are sure to receive the reward of their deeds, either in flattery or influence, or more tangible good things. It is when, like their master, they are *independent*, that they are liable to be derided and denounced. Cost what it may, however, ministers should avoid party spirit; it is inconsistent with that kindness and forbearance which the gospel breathes. The beloved John felt it when he said, "Master, we saw one casting out devils, and we forbade him, because he followeth not us." The apostles manifested it when they said in reference to the Samar-

itans, who refused the Saviour permission to pass through their streets, "Wilt thou that we command fire to come down from Heaven and consume them, even as Elias did?" It is not surprising that they who steadily contemplate a wicked system, should burn with indignation, and denounce those who uphold it, without discrimination and without mercy. But let us judge *charitably* of motives, while we judge *severely* of principles. Had we (for example) been reared in the South, we might have been holders of slaves, and had we received them by inheritance, and treated them with kindness, we might, with Bible in hand, (especially if expounded by a slaveholding ministry,) have thought ourselves innocent. The tendency of education to warp our opinions, has not always been overlooked by even the most forward champions of emancipation. Indeed, so strongly have they made the distinction between slavery and slaveholders, (shielding the latter while they denounced the former,) that they have been tauntingly called abstractionists. The epithet, however, is likely to be transferred to another party, who, while they assert that slavery cannot enter our new territory, are ready to move heaven and earth to declare the *principle* that it *ought* to be permitted to do so. And this is one of the encouraging signs of the times, that this great question is to be discussed *abstractly*. This will strip the controversy of much of its bitterness, and bring the parties at once to issue, if not to agreement. Another favorable sign is, that the "powers that be," instead of discouraging free discussion on great moral questions, lead the way in it.

Christ would have his ministers free from the charge of *interfering with the administration of civil law*. On this subject he gave impressive lessons. The people receiving him as Messiah, did not hesitate to regard his authority as supreme. Yet he refused to *make* civil law, or *abrogate* it, or *enforce* it. On one occasion, being called on to settle a disputed inheritance, he said: "Man, who made me a judge, or a divider over you?" When men brought a guilty woman into his presence, he declined to pronounce the sentence of the law upon her. He laid down moral law for the guidance of all men, and referred to a tribunal where

he would sit as judge of all, but he left the laws of the State in the hands of civil rulers. The great error of his Church has been in assuming civil as well as ecclesiastical authority. This it is which, for so long, made her either a usurper, or an insurgent, or a dependent of the state, which secularized her views, corrupted her motives, and crippled her energies. But for this, we might, ere this, have reached the Millenium. In the United States, we have been careful to avoid this error. Perhaps a desire to avoid even the appearance of this, induced the New England clergymen to frame their petition against the Nebraska bill in words too professional. They would not come before the Senate as *politicians*, asking a hearing on *political topics*, in *political forms*, but as ministers, begging to be heard upon the *moral* bearings of a bill. They knew that agriculturists were heard on agricultural interests, merchants on mercantile, and sailors on marine; that petitions go in almost yearly on the tariff and internal improvements. About the time their own petition was forwarded, one was presented (I believe), by tobacconists, asking an increased duty on segars, and it was duly considered. They therefore confined themselves to a protest against those tendencies of the measure in question which affected the interests confided to their care. Perhaps it may hereafter be deemed unfortunate that Congress treated them cavalierly, simply because they did not come in the phrase, the spirit and the purpose of politicians. It is profoundly to be regretted that they should be *challenged* to enter the political arena.

Thus far ministers should avoid politics, but there remains to them a large residuum of duty to the State: they should render to God the things that are his. We owe it to Him to preach truth both to rich and poor, to reprove sin in high places as well as low ones. However exalted rulers be, they are not above moral obligation; they are liable to sin and therefore subject to admonition. "Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart; thou shalt in any wise reprove thy brother and not suffer sin upon him." There was in former days a king that oppressed a certain people, and there was a minister that said to him, "Let the people go."

True, he proved his commission by miracles and his authority by Divine judgments. The age of miracles is past, but the principles which those miracles established remain. Saul, in violation of law, offered a burnt offering. And Samuel said to him, "Thou hast done foolishly, thou hast not kept the commandment of the Lord thy God, thy kingdom shall not continue." King David on a certain occasion sinned. Nathan then spake to him of a rich man that had exceeding many flocks and herds, and a poor man that had nothing save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up, and it grew up together with him and his children, it did eat of his own meat and drank of his own cup and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveler unto the rich man and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd to dress for the wayfaring man that was come to him. [The prophet does not say whether it was a *white* lamb or a *black* one, but I suppose the color of the wool would not have altered the nature of the case.] And David's anger kindled against the man; and he said to Nathan, "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die. And he shall restore fourfold, because he did this thing and because he had no pity." And the prophet said, "thou art the man." It was the theory of the Jews that the king was the viceroy of God; he was therefore high and lifted up, and yet not so high as to be above reproof from human lips. It is our theory of government that the highest power is the people, and that the rulers are their servants, though this may not be the theory of 38° 53'—it is of *this latitude*. If those servants take thousands of ewe lambs from the bosoms of the poor to slay and dress them for the stranger, shall not the Nathans be allowed to put parables to them? I should like to put one.

In ancient times there was one Ahab, and there was one Jezebel, and there was one Elijah, too, and when the king stole the vineyard and killed the owner, the prophet meddled with politics. And doubtless politicians complained of agitation, and said, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" But the prophet confronted the king, right in the vineyard, and said, Thus saith the Lord, hast



thou killed and taken possession. The conscience smitten Ahab said to Elijah, "Hast thou found me, oh mine enemy! And he answered, I have found thee, because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the Lord." There were prophets after Elijah and thus ran their commission, "Son of man, cause Jerusalem"—that is the capital—"to know her *abominations*." Ez. 16, 1. (Some say that ministers should avoid politics, because it is a muddy stream, others because it is a pure one. The logic of neither is good. If the latter be correct, then we ought to insist on enjoying the transparent waters, and surely these persons will be the last to insist that we do not need their purifying power. If the former are right,—and I suppose they are—we ought to bear in mind that all sin is muddy, and that no sinner would be saved, if ministers of mercy did not trouble muddy pools.) "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins." Is. 58, 1. "And I will make thee unto this people a fenced brazen wall; and they shall fight against thee, but shall not prevail against thee, for I am with thee to save thee, and to deliver thee, saith the Lord." Jer. 15, 19. And how did the prophets fulfil such commissions? Nehemiah, for example, finding the capital polluted, says, "Then contended I with the rulers." \* \* "Then contended I with the nobles"—the senators—"of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do?" Neh. 13, 13. Sometimes the prophets were dumb dogs, and then did their master send terrible messages to them.

But you will say all this was under the old dispensation. Under this we have nothing to do but "to preach Christ." Granted. And what is it to preach Christ, but to proclaim his *mission*, in his *spirit* and according to his *example*. What is his *mission*? Hear him as he stands in the synagogue with the parchment roll in his hand: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek, he hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim *liberty* to the captives, and the opening of the prison doors to them that *are bound*. To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord

and the day of vengeance of our God." Alas, the church has been, to too great an extent, splitting theological hairs, and rattling dry skeletons raked from the ashes of the dark ages, instead of following out the scheme of her great leader, and thus has often brought contempt upon herself, raised up infidel ranks around her, and left noble enterprises either to be achieved without her aid, or to fail for want of her moderation, her wisdom and her prayers. And what is the *spirit* of our Lord? Meek, lowly, gentle, forgiving, yet firm as a rock, and consuming (to iniquity) as the electric stream. Hark! the prophet in vision describes the Son of man—"And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord; and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with *righteousness* shall he judge the poor and reprove with *equity* for the meek of the earth, and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." Is. 11: 3. Again—"Who may abide the day of his coming, and who shall stand when he appeareth?" Not them that bought and sold in the temple—not the lawyers who took away the key of knowledge—not the rulers who garnished the sepulchres of the prophets while their own souls were as sepulchres—not the murderer of infants, nor that other Herod, to whom he sent that message, "Go ye and tell that fox," &c. Though he came to save sinners, he did not come to spare sin, even in politics. He undermined the foundations of both the Jewish and the Roman state. His forerunner went to court and withstood the adulterous king to his face, and sealed his testimony against wickedness in high places with his blood. John struck the first spark of that divine flame, in reference to which Christ said, "I have come to send fire on the earth, and what will I if it be already kindled?" His followers scattered that fire around them. Paul made Felix tremble on the judgment seat, and Agrippa on his throne: he shook the pillars of State alike at Mars' hill, and at Cesar's household. There was not a State on the earth, in apostolic times, that did not rest on the pillars of a false religion, and there was not a false religion

which the apostles did not openly, stoutly and perpetually assail; there was then no political system against which they did not wage an unintermitting and everlasting war. Of this politicians accused them; often torturing their words and charging them with designs which they did not entertain. It was on a false charge of treason that Christ was crucified, and it was for political interference that the apostles, one by one, suffered the martyr's death. It was for the same cause that Jerome and Huss, and a long line of worthy predecessors and successors walked to the stake singing hymns. Have rulers nothing to do with Christ? Does his jurisdiction cease at the threshold of the capitol? Does sin cease to be sin because preceded by the magic words, "Be it enacted"? It would be well enough for us to ponder the 2d Psalm: "Why do the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed, saying: 'Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us.'" \* \* But what of all this? "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto me: Thou art my son; this day have I begotten thee." "Be wise, now, therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." It would be well for certain religious editors to ponder this. They cry out, do not meddle with politics. Christ meddles with them. Opposition to slavery however might be justified on religious grounds—adultery, polygamy, cruelty, are all hindrances to the spread of the gospel. What should be said of a system which favors all these? The conscience must be reached through the intellect, but slavery palsies the intellect. Would a proposition to pluck out eyes and fill up ears be political? Better lose eyes and ears than mind. The final triumphs of the Saviour can never be achieved while slavery lasts, or civil governments ordain or sustain oppression. The

time must come when "all kings shall fall down before Him ; all nations shall serve Him."

In view of these things many clergymen have spoken out against a certain pending public measure. For this they have been denounced in very *high* places and very *low* ones. For myself I have no apology. The question of slavery in the States is a difficult one—it is not simple, but complex—not abstract, but concrete ; it relates not to a new evil, but an old one ; one which has come down by the sin of both the British and American governments from the ages of darkness ; it is inwoven with the institutions of the south, social, political and religious. It has polluted her literature ; it has shaped her manners and fixed her prejudices, and bound itself up with her interests. We have been accustomed to pity and extenuate—and though we might still bear with the slaveholder, and wait for the truth to dissolve the chains of the slave as the south wind does the snow, yet we can think of no apology for the Nebraska bill. The question it presents is simple, abstract, novel. It proposes to render virgin soil liable to pollution ; to render a surface of the map, already white, by law of peculiar force and solemnity, likely to be blackened ; to open the way to endorse and imitate the iniquity of the past. It proposes, so far as a certain oppressed people are concerned, to submit the question of liberty—the fundamental purpose of government—the protection of society—to popular mercy, excluding from the polls, however, the oppressed people, and admitting to them those whose interests or prejudices may incline them to vote against their rights. And yet men tell us we don't understand it. Strange bill, that after being discussed for months, cannot be understood ! It has, however, a bright side, for however enigmatical to the north, it is clear to the south. It would be clear to all, if Germans or Catholics were substituted for an oppressed race. I believe in popular sovereignty. Do you believe in liberty ? Let us never, then, put it in jeopardy in regard to either black or white, Protestant or Catholic.